## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions of claims in the

application.

1. (Previously Presented): A method of producing a thermoelectric conversion

material, wherein, in producing a thermoelectric conversion material comprising a porous

material composed of a sintered body, microparticles having a particle diameter of 1 μm or

less or a fibrous substance having a diameter of 1 μm or less that serves as a void-forming

agent is mixed with a base powder, and in sintering this mixture, the mixed powder is

sintered in an atmosphere of an inert gas, a reducing gas, or a controlled oxidizing gas so that

after the densification of a solid part formed by sintering the base powder proceeds, the

void-forming agent is removed from the sintered body, thereby producing a thermoelectric

conversion material in which continuous electrical conduction paths composed of

independent closed pores having an average pore diameter of 1 μm or less or independent

closed air tubes having an average diameter of 1 μm or less are provided inside the material.

2. (Cancelled).

3. (Cancelled).

4. (Cancelled).

5. (Cancelled).

6. (Previously Presented): A method of producing a thermoelectric conversion

material, wherein, in producing a thermoelectric material composed of a sintered body,

microparticles having a particle diameter of 1 μm or less or a fibrous substance having a

diameter of 1 μm or less that serves as a void-forming agent is mixed with a base powder,

and in sintering this mixture, the mixed powder is sintered at a temperature lower than the

temperature at which the void-forming agent is gasified, dissolved, or melted so that after

the densification of a solid part formed by sintering the base powder proceeds, the

void-forming agent is removed, thereby producing a thermoelectric conversion material in

which continuous electrical conduction paths composed of independent closed pores having

an average pore diameter of 1 μm or less or independent closed air tubes having an average

diameter of 1 μm or less are provided inside the material.

7. (Previously Presented): The method of producing the thermoelectric conversion

material according to claim 1, wherein the void-forming agent is removed by gasification,

dissolution, or melting.

8. (Previously Presented): The method of producing the thermoelectric conversion

material according to claim 1, wherein, after the densification of the solid part proceeds,

sintering is performed at a temperature higher than the temperature at which the

void-forming agent is gasified so that the void-forming agent is removed by gasification.

9. (Cancelled).

10. (Cancelled).

11. (Cancelled).

12. (Previously Presented): The method of producing the thermoelectric conversion

material according to claim 6, wherein the void-forming agent is removed by gasification,

dissolution, or melting.

13. (Previously Presented): The method of producing the thermoelectric conversion

material according to claim 6, wherein, after the densification of the solid part proceeds,

sintering is performed at a temperature higher than the temperature at which the

void-forming agent is gasified so that the void-forming agent is removed by gasification.

14. (Previously Presented): The method of producing a thermoelectric conversion

material according to claim 1, wherein the distance between nearest voids composed of the

independent closed pores or the independent closed air tubes is 5 μm or less, and the density

of the number of voids is $1 \times 10^{10}/cm^3$ or more.


15. (Previously Presented): The method of producing a thermoelectric conversion

material according to claim 6, wherein the distance between nearest voids composed of the

independent closed pores or the independent closed air tubes is 5 μm or less, and the density

of the number of voids is $1 \times 10^{10}/cm^3$ or more.